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Al-Maqrīzī, Hashimism, and the Early Caliphates*

INTRODUCTION

Like his contemporaries in the field of history such as al-‘Aynī and Ibn Ḥajar, al-Maqrīzī was an heir to a classical Arabic historiographical tradition stretching far into the past. Al-Maqrīzī inherited from this tradition not merely a corpus of ancient sources, but also the very form that his history-writing took. It was also from this tradition that al-Maqrīzī inherited many of the subjects that were considered to be the standard fare of any good medieval Muslim historian. Foremost among these subjects was an issue that formed *the* central debate of the formative era of Islam: the caliphate, a topic that enervated Muslim historians from the very beginning of Islamic history until today. At the crux of the issue was the concept of the *ahl al-bayt*, “The People of the Household,” that is, of course, the household of the Prophet Muḥammad. Those who belonged to the *ahl al-bayt* could be said to have a legitimate claim to the Prophet’s patrimony, that is, the office of the caliphate. Who, then, were classed as within the *ahl al-bayt*, and who without? Did it include only the Prophet’s immediate ‘Alid descendants through his daughter Fāṭimah and her husband ‘Alī, did it include his whole clan, the Banū Hāshim, or did it stretch to include the broader tribe of Quraysh, to which the Banū Hāshim belonged alongside other clans such as the Banū Umayyah? Insofar as the question is usually seen as central to the distinction between Sunnis and Shi‘ites, and between different historical visions within each of these two sects, it would be an understatement to say that the question has received more than a few contentious responses over the centuries.

Given the fact that al-Maqrīzī had eight centuries of writings about the caliphate in place before him, and given the fact that he was himself an established Sunni scholar of the Shafi‘i *madhhab*, one might expect al-Maqrīzī to follow his Sunni

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predecessors on this subject and simply favor one of two visions of the past favored by most Sunni writers before his time. That is, he might: (1) favor a generic conciliatory pro-Quraysh reading of Sunni history in which the Umayyad dynasty, wicked as they were, *and* the Abbasid dynasty (from the Banū Hāshim clan) that followed them were to be recognized as the legitimate successors of the Prophet, even if we do not always find in them models of proper Muslim conduct. Such a stance is easy to find, as, for example in the chronicle of al-Ṭabarī, a source on the early caliphates much used by later Arab historians.¹ Alternately, al-Maqrīzī might (2) exhibit a simple pro-Abbasid bias on the question of the caliphate, in which the Abbasid family, and neither their wicked predecessors the Umayyads nor the descendants of ‘Alī, had exclusive claims to be the legitimate successors of the Prophet. The anonymous *Akhhbār al-Dawlah al-‘Abbāsīyah* is the most famous example of this trend.² Then again, if we were willing to be broad-minded, we might even be willing to add a third stance for al-Maqrīzī to inherit, namely a pro-Umayyad stance, or at least a vision of the early caliphate that was less critical of the Umayyads as were so many of his predecessors. Such a vision of the early caliphates no longer survives intact, but telling fragments of it do exist.³

In fact, what one does find when one reads the several works of his that address the issue of the caliphate directly is a much more complicated picture. Al-Maqrīzī is certainly not pro-Umayyad; that is clear from all his writings. Nor is he any kind of crypto-Shi‘ite. Yet, at the same time, he is not a blind partisan of the Abbasids either, and he is as free to criticize the Abbasids as he is the Umayyads, particularly in his work on Umayyad-Abbasid rivalry called the *Kitāb al-Nizā’ wa-al-Takhāṣum*, aptly translated by Bosworth as “The Book of contention and strife.” Why does al-Maqrīzī have such a pessimistic opinion of the two caliphates?

After reading several of al-Maqrīzī’s shorter works, I am more willing than ever to entertain the answer that “that’s just the way it is”: al-Maqrīzī was a very complex man, much more so than we usually think. However, I suggest that two factors shaped al-Maqrīzī’s attitude toward the early caliphates. First, we must be willing to recognize the realities of al-Maqrīzī’s historical context: al-Maqrīzī

¹Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden, 1879–1901).

²*Akhhbār al-Dawlah al-‘Abbāsīyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī et al. (Beirut, 1971).

³On this, see Moshe Sharon, “The Umayyads as *Ahl al-Bayt*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1992): 115–52. See also the description of a *Kitāb al-Barahīn fī Imāmat al-Umawīyīn* (The Book of proofs of the imamate of the Umayyads) in al-Mas‘ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1894), 336–37. On the survival of Umayyad sympathies, see Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in ‘Abbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany, 2001), 51–55.

wrote his different works about the early caliphate at different times and places, for different patrons, and this probably affected the substance of what he wrote. Second, I would also argue that one can make sense of al-Maqrīzī's complex assessment of the early caliphates by recognizing what I shall call his "Hashimism," his belief that any member of the Banū Hāshim clan is worthy of honor; this includes both Abbasids *and*—significantly—'Alids. But it cannot be stressed enough that al-Maqrīzī's Hashimism is *not* Shi'ism. For example, he does not recognize any line of Shi'ite imams, nor does he feel that 'Alī should have succeeded after the Prophet's death instead of Abū Bakr. However, al-Maqrīzī's Hashimism did lead him to condemn those regimes (Umayyads or even Abbasids) that persecuted other members of the Banū Hāshim and to sympathize with their victims, many of whom have, historically, been 'Alids. The result is an attitude toward the early caliphates that is best appreciated from a broad survey of al-Maqrīzī's works, rather than a study of one specific text.

AL-MAQRĪZĪ'S WORKS ON THE CALIPHATE

Al-Maqrīzī composed four principal works that address the issue of the caliphate directly. The first work is al-Maqrīzī's massive biography of the Prophet, the *Imtā' al-Asmā' bi-Mā lil-Rasūl min al-Anbā' wa-al-Amwāl wa-al-Ḥafadah wa-al-Matā'* (The Delectation of ears concerning stories about the Messenger, his possessions, his offspring and helpers and things of which he made use) written sometime during al-Maqrīzī's stay in Mecca prior to 1433, since it is cited in his short work of that year, the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada fī Banī Umayyah wa-Banī al-'Abbās*, described below. The *Imtā'* is best known in Shākir's 1941 Cairo edition, but this is in fact only a partial edition, representing merely the first part of the work devoted to the more or less familiar narrative of the *sīrah* of the Prophet.⁴ A complete edition is now available in fifteen volumes, and it shows that the work is very much more than a mere biography of the Prophet.⁵ Just to give one small example, al-Maqrīzī's long excursus on Judaism and Christianity reflects his quite detailed knowledge of the People of the Book, and there is much more to be found besides.⁶ Many traditions cited in the *Imtā'* address the vexed question of who could be counted as *ahl al-bayt*, and so bear directly on the issue of the caliphate.

The second work is al-Maqrīzī's best-known work about the caliphates, *Kitāb al-Nizā' wa-al-Takhāṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayyah wa-Banī Hāshim* (Book of

⁴Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-Asmā' bi-mā lil-Rasūl min al-Anbā' wa-al-Amwāl wa-al-Ḥafadah wa-al-Matā'*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo, 1941).

⁵Edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Nuwaysī (Beirut, 1999). Hereafter referred to as "IA."

⁶IA, 4:151 ff.

contention and strife concerning the relations between the Banū Umayyah and the Banū Hāshim). Its date of composition is also unknown, but it too is cited in the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada* and so must have been composed before 1433. The work was edited by Geert Vos in the nineteenth century and by many others since then.⁷ It has even been translated into English with detailed annotations by Bosworth.⁸ In this work, al-Maqrīzī sought to account for the speedy rise of the Umayyad house to the caliphate after the death of the Prophet and the much-delayed victory of the Abbasids, despite the fact that the Umayyads were among the Prophet's most inveterate enemies and the Abbasids were among his closest allies.

The third work is al-Maqrīzī's short epistle entitled *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada fī Banī Umayyah wa-Banī al-'Abbās*, or "Concerning what has come down to us about the Banū Umayyah and the Banū al-'Abbās," which has not yet been edited, and so survives only in a unique manuscript now housed at the Austrian National Library in Vienna.⁹ Al-Maqrīzī composed this epistle in 1433, when he was living in Mecca toward the end of his life. He said he composed the work in response to a *mufāḍilah*, a discussion of the various merits of the Umayyads and Abbasids, that took place in the *majlis* of the epistle's unnamed patron. His intent was to sift through "the welter [of accounts] that have come down to us about the two groups."¹⁰ Like some of the other short works al-Maqrīzī wrote on the subject, the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada* is divided into two sections, one on accounts about the Umayyads, one on the Abbasids. The work appears to be stridently pro-Abbasid and so Bosworth speculated that the unnamed patron of the work was in fact a member of the Abbasid house, a point to which we will return.¹¹

The fourth and final work is al-Maqrīzī's short epistle *Kitāb Ma'rifat Mā*

⁷Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Nizā' wa-al-Takhaṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayyah wa-Banī Hāshim*, ed. G. Vos as *Die Kämpfe und Streitigkeiten zwischen den Banū Umajja und den Banū Hāšim* (Leiden, 1888). For this paper, I have consulted the edition by Ḥusayn Mu'nis (Cairo, 1988), hereafter referred to as "NT."

⁸C. E. Bosworth, trans., *Al-Maqrīzī's "Book of Contention and Strife Concerning The Relations between the Banū Umayyah and the Banū Hāshim,"* Journal of Semitic Studies, Monograph no. 3 (Manchester, 1980).

⁹Codex Vindobonensis Palatinus, Alter Fond, 342b of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (Flügel 887). The work itself (342b) is the second part of a four-part anthology (MS Alter Fond 342) of some of al-Maqrīzī's shorter works. Hereafter referred to as "DMW."

¹⁰DMW, fol. 159a: "fa-qayyadtu mā tayassarū mim mā warada fī al-farīqayn."

¹¹C. E. Bosworth, "Al-Maqrīzī's Epistle 'Concerning What Has Come Down To Us About the Banū Umayyah and the Banū al-'Abbās,'" in *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān 'Abbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1981), 39–45. The article provides a more thorough description of the work than that attempted here. On the possible identity of the patron, see p. 45.

Yajibu li-Āl al-Bayt al-Nabawī min al-Ḥaqq ‘alā Man ‘Adāhum (Book of knowledge about what should be recognized as the righteousness of the cause of the prophetic household against those who oppose it), written in 1438, when al-Maqrīzī was seventy-four and had returned from Mecca to take up residence again in Cairo.¹² It is a detailed examination of five Quranic passages that al-Maqrīzī held to be of relevance for the issue of the caliphate and of the status of the Banū Hāshim more generally. Incidentally, it also contains an interesting final chapter consisting of five anecdotes from al-Maqrīzī’s own time demonstrating among other things the noble deeds of some of the *sharīfs* of Mecca, and, surprisingly, the alleged Hashimi lineage of Tīmūr Lenk.

AL-MAQRĪZĪ’S HASHIMISM

What do these four works have to say about al-Maqrīzī’s Hashimism? I will begin with the *Imtā’*. Evidence for al-Maqrīzī’s attitude toward the Banū Hāshim does not readily spring from this text, but it is there in great quantity mixed and scattered about with the various accounts about the details of the life of the Prophet, as, for example, in traditions in which the Prophet swears off shedding the blood of any Hashimi, or the accounts of the merits of specific Hashimis like Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib, slain in battle at Mu’tah in 629.¹³ Other accounts are more subtle, as in a famous account about a campaign of the Prophet against some Meccan opponents. Before leaving, he put Abū Bakr in charge of the army, another companion in charge of Medina, and ‘Alī in charge of his household (*‘alā ahlihi*). The Prophet’s opponents then began to suggest that he had done so merely to be rid of ‘Alī. When ‘Alī left Medina to join the Prophet and tell him this, Muḥammad replied: “They lie! I have truly only appointed you over what lies behind me. Now get back there and act as my deputy over my household and your household. Are you not satisfied to be in a relationship to me as Aaron was to Moses . . . ?”¹⁴ In another account the Banū Hāshim are said to have been the ones who prayed first over Muḥammad’s dead body, and so on.¹⁵

While these sorts of accounts are scattered throughout the work, the clearest evidence for al-Maqrīzī’s attitude about the Banū Hāshim and the caliphate comes in the sections of the work devoted to the Prophet’s family and household. Here, al-Maqrīzī is careful to enumerate the various definitions of *ahl al-bayt* that Muslim scholars have propounded. He lists four definitions: (1) that the *ahl al-bayt*

¹²Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb Ma‘rifat Mā Yajibu li-Āl al-Bayt al-Nabawī min al-Ḥaqq ‘alā Man ‘Adāhum*, ed. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin ‘Abd Allāh al-Sirāwī (Damascus, 1998), hereafter referred to as “*MMY*.”

¹³*IA*, 1:108, 337–44.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 2:50.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 136.

are those to whom *ṣadaqah* is forbidden as a source of income; of this definition, there are three sub-sets, (a) those who identify this group as the Banū Hāshim and the Banū al-Muṭṭalib combined, (b) those who identify this group as the Banū Hāshim exclusively, and (c) those who identify this group as Quraysh more broadly, including the Banū Hāshim, the Banū al-Muṭṭalib, the Banū Umayyah, etc.; (2) that the *ahl al-bayt* are the children and wives of the Prophet exclusively; (3) that the *ahl al-bayt* are all the followers of the Prophet from now until Judgement Day; (4) that the *ahl al-bayt* are the truly God-fearing members of the *ummah*. Of these four options, al-Maqrīzī very explicitly chooses the first. For him, the *ahl al-bayt* are those to whom *ṣadaqah* is forbidden as a source of income; this group is identifiable with the Banū Hāshim and the Banū al-Muṭṭalib combined. Moreover, as al-Maqrīzī explicitly states in his own words: "this excludes the Banū 'Abd Shams, the Banū Nawfal of 'Abd Manāf, and all the rest of Quraysh." Not surprisingly, this is the stance on the issue taken by the Shafi'i law-school to which al-Maqrīzī belonged.¹⁶

However, it is worth pointing out that in this discussion, al-Maqrīzī makes a point of mentioning Shi'ite claims about the *ahl al-bayt*, in particular their understanding of the famous *ahl al-kisā'* tradition, which defines the *ahl al-bayt* as 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn exclusively. This exegetical tradition seeks to provide a context for Quran 33:33: "God only desires to put away filthiness from you as his household, and with cleansing to cleanse you." According to this tradition, after this verse was revealed, the Prophet wrapped 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn in a garment of his (*kisā'*), signifying that they alone belonged to his household. But even in discussing these traditions, al-Maqrīzī does so merely to refute them.¹⁷ Indeed, the *Imtā'* includes a rousing plea for venerating the Quraysh and Companions in general, albeit not all of them as *ahl al-bayt*:¹⁸

Know that the household of the Messenger of God and his beloved ones are of two kinds, those whom God took from us [during the Prophet's life] . . . , and those whom God kept to serve as a consolation for the Prophet's eyes, such as 'Ā'ishah, Zaynab, and all the Mothers of the Faithful, and Fāṭimah and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib . . . and Abū Sufyān and all the Companions [of the Prophet] and those whom

¹⁶Ibid., 5:372–405. See p. 382: "Wa-hādhā al-qawl min an āl al-rasūl hum alladhīna tuḥrima 'alayhim al-ṣadaqah huwa aṣaḥḥ al-aqwāl al-arba'ah . . . wa-kharaja Banū 'Abd Shams wa-Banū Nawfal ibnay 'Abd Manāf wa-sā'ir Quraysh 'an hadhayn al-baṭnayn."

¹⁷Ibid., 383–88.

¹⁸Ibid., 6:20–21.

he loved. [We should] love and honor every person in these two groups, accept their reports, glorify their cause, and invoke God's pleasure upon them, for he [the Prophet] has done so.

I cannot think of a clearer statement of Sunni conciliation inflected with Hashimism.

In the *Kitāb Ma'rifat Mā Yajibū*, al-Maqrīzī is the most explicit about his feelings for the Banū Hāshim. Indeed, he explains his motives behind the composition of the work as follows:¹⁹

When I observed that most people were remiss in acknowledging the legitimacy of the Family of the Prophet, that they opposed what legitimacy they possessed, that they tarnished their glory, and were ignorant of their station relative to God Most High, I desired to produce a tract about this matter that demonstrates the greatness of their glory and that guides the God-fearing to the mightiness of their powers. [In this way, the God-fearing reader] might remain within the bounds of propriety and fulfill what God has promised them and bestowed upon them.

As indicated earlier, this work is organized into five chapters, each dealing with a separate Quranic verse that al-Maqrīzī feels pertains to the issue of the *ahl al-bayt*. In the first chapter, he returns to the issue of the *ahl al-kisā'* tradition that he broached in the *Imtā'*. He does not add much that is new, save that he includes a long extract from an anti-Shi'ite tract by an earlier Iraqi scholar, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 657/1258), a disciple of Ibn Taymīyah.²⁰ Although Shi'ite arguments about the *ahl al-bayt* are reproduced in this tract, they are nevertheless refuted, and doubly so as they are buried by a long excerpt from Ibn 'Arabī's *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* which argues for an *'iṣmah*-like quality of grace for the *ahl al-bayt*.²¹ At no time does al-Maqrīzī explicitly reveal to us here who *he* thinks the *ahl al-bayt* are, but the chapter ends significantly with a statement by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (an Umayyad) speaking of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (a Hashimi 'Alid) that "There is not one member of the Banū Hāshim but that possesses the quality of intercession [for our sins on Judgement Day]." Chapter two (a commentary on Quran 52:21) argues that the descendants (*dhurriyāt*) of the Prophet will be forgiven for their crimes, their disobedience will be overlooked, and their sins

¹⁹MMY, 35.

²⁰Ibid., 57–62.

²¹Ibid., 62–69.

absolved that they may enter Paradise without experiencing the pains of Hell.²² The key question, of course, is whether the term *dhurriyāt* refers merely to the Prophet's sons and daughters, or also to his grandchildren, and, thus, to the 'Alids. Al-Maqrīzī presents both arguments, but never decides the issue here.²³ Instead, he waits for his third chapter (commenting on Quran 18:82) to make that point, arguing that if, as people say, the doves of the Ḥaram in Mecca are descended from two doves who had a nest in the mouth of a cave in which the Prophet sought refuge, then surely God would protect the descendants of his own Prophet, and, even more so, the children of Fāṭimah, and keep them from entering Hell on Judgement Day.²⁴ Along the same lines, chapter four (a commentary on Quran 13:23) demonstrates that these descendants will enter heaven on account of the Prophet's special regard for them and because of their own innate righteousness.²⁵ Chapter five, the last chapter (on Quran 42:23) and thus the one the reader/listener "takes home," returns to the issue of terminology and tries to define what is meant by *qurbah* or *qarābah*, "nearness," another crucial concept in the arguments about the caliphate.²⁶ For it was those with *qurbah* to the Prophet that God first directed Muḥammad to seek out as followers. As with *ahl al-bayt*, al-Maqrīzī lays out the various definitions of the term for us, but finally settles on one, conciliatory reading. For al-Maqrīzī, *qurbah* is an attribute that every Muslim shares, even if in varying degrees. For the Arabs are the Prophet's kin-group, and even if the Quraysh are closer to him than the Arab tribe of Yaman, they are all descendants of Ismā'īl. However, because of their nearness, the Quraysh possess a special status above all other Arabs. It is incumbent upon us to respect them all.²⁷

In the *Kitāb al-Nizā'*, al-Maqrīzī returns to the issue of *qurbah*, but not before purveying a complicated tissue of evidence to explain why the impious Umayyads attained the caliphate prior to the Banū Hāshim, by which al-Maqrīzī of course means the Abbasid dynasty. The Umayyads, al-Maqrīzī shows us, were excluded from the Prophet's share of the booty from his raid on Khaybar (and so can be expected to be ineligible for a share in his legacy, i.e., the caliphate), they opposed and indeed fought the Prophet during his lifetime, they ruled as tyrants when they did become caliphs, and were furthermore arrogant in their station, forgetting to whom it was they owed their glory.²⁸ But, al-Maqrīzī tells us, the Abbasids were

²²Ibid., 84–85.

²³Ibid., 75–85; *IA*, 6:3–13.

²⁴*MMY*, 88.

²⁵Ibid., 95.

²⁶On these concepts, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 146 ff.

²⁷*MMY*, 107–8.

²⁸*NT*, 67–69.

no angels, either. For this Hashimi dynasty, when it finally did attain power, did so only by seizing power when Islam was weak. To make matters worse, they transformed the caliphate into a despotism, murdered other Muslims, and, like their Umayyad predecessors, came to rule as tyrants, with a greater preference for *adab* than for the *sunnah* of the Prophet.²⁹ As al-Maqrīzī puts it:³⁰

Now what connection is there between this tyranny and evil-doing, and the justice of the divine law revealed to Muḥammad and the exemplary lives of the Rightly-Guided Imams? Or between this frightful barbarity shown towards near kinsmen and the compassion evinced by the Prophet? By God, this conduct has nothing whatever to do with true religion; on the contrary, it is the sort of thing which God . . . has described in His words (Quran 47:22-23), "If you turned away, would you perhaps then wreak evil in the land and sever all bonds of kinship?"

And it is here, finally, that one can see al-Maqrīzī's feelings of reverence for the Banū Hāshim, as reflected in his understanding of that key term, "nearness" (*qurbah*, *qarābah*). In his discussion of the blockade upon the Prophet imposed by Quraysh, al-Maqrīzī notes that the Prophet's ancestor 'Abd Manāf produced two lineages of potential help to him. The first, the Banū Umayyah of 'Abd Manāf, he excluded, since they had been godless and bitter opponents of him even in the Jāhilīyah. The second, the Banū al-Muṭṭalib of 'Abd Manāf, however, had been early converts and supporters, and so he took them with him, even the members of the clan who did not convert to Islam. In al-Maqrīzī's words:³¹

They went into the ravine with him, both the believers and the unbelievers of the clan—the believers out of solidarity in faith, the unbelievers out of solidarity in kinship. So, if you consider all these points, two valuable conclusions will become plain to you. Firstly, the deciding factor is nearness of faith, not of the flesh (*al-'ibrah bi-qarābat al-dīn, lā bi-qarābat al-ṭīn*). Secondly, mere blood relationship means nothing.

This then, allows us to make sense of some the more notable characteristics of al-Maqrīzī's attitude toward the early caliphates. If Quraysh are all to be accorded

²⁹Ibid., 88–97.

³⁰Ibid., 97.

³¹Ibid., 67.

respect, and the Banū Hāshim especially so, because of their identity as *ahl al-bayt*, nevertheless, in the final analysis, it is their piety, not their genealogical status that determines our respect for them. And so, impious Hashimis get censured just as hotly as do wicked Umayyads. Even the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, whom many Sunni historians saw as the restorer of the faith after the unfortunate interlude of the Abbasid "Inquisition" or *miḥnah*, even he is not immune to al-Maqrīzī's high standards, for he, in enforcing a restored *sunnah*, murdered other Muslims and other Hashimis.³² And similarly, he makes an analogy between the Muslim community and the Israelites, bemoaning the scattered and fallen state of the Quraysh in his day by comparing it to the Diaspora of the Jewish people, and the impotence of the once so promising Abbasid caliphs under the Mamluks to the status of the Israelites under Greek rule after their return from Exile.³³

In many ways, the last of al-Maqrīzī's works to be considered here, the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada*, is a summary of the *Nizā'*. That is, it too is a roughly historical work, dominated by two sections, one on the perfidy of the Umayyads, followed by one on the Abbasids. However, it is quite unlike the *Nizā'* in that it allows no room for the faults of the Abbasids, and instead concentrates solely on their merits. Thus, as in the *Nizā'*, the work begins with a condemnation of the Umayyads as the ultimate opponents of the Prophet, excluded from his legacy at Khaybar.³⁴ It was the Umayyads, after all, who burned the Ka'bah during the Second Fitnah,³⁵ who murdered al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī and coldly gloated over that fact,³⁶ and who were responsible for any number of innovations against the *sunnah*, such as the delaying of canonical prayer-times.³⁷ The Abbasids, however, were pillars of righteousness, best represented by their pious forebears such as al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the very embodiment of Prophetic *'ilm*, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās.³⁸ Indeed, the reign of the Banū al-'Abbās would issue in the eschaton, in which Evil would perish and Good emerge victorious for all time.³⁹ If one had to provide only one example of their merits, al-Maqrīzī says to look no further than their decision to stop the ritual cursing of 'Alī from the pulpits, a practice begun by the Umayyads.⁴⁰ Here, again, al-Maqrīzī's conciliatory Hashimism emerges:

³²Ibid., 102.

³³Ibid., 107.

³⁴*DMW*, fols. 159a–160b.

³⁵Ibid., fols. 162b–163a.

³⁶Ibid., fol. 163b ff.

³⁷Ibid., fols. 166a–166b.

³⁸Ibid., fols. 167a–169b.

³⁹Ibid., fols. 170a–172b.

⁴⁰Ibid., fol. 172b.

what better symbol of it than the Hashimi Abbasids, so strongly associated with Sunnism to al-Maqrīzī, putting an end to the cursing of their fellow Hashimi ‘Alī, the first Shi‘ite imam?

Yet the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada* also contains at least one statement that might suggest something more than mere conciliation. In introducing the Umayyads, al-Maqrīzī takes a moment to place them chronologically, revealing both his vision of early Islamic history, and of the caliphate: “The reign of the Banū Umayyah came after the reign of the beloved Rightly-Guided Caliphs, who are Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, and al-Ḥasan, may God be pleased with them.”⁴¹ The startling addition here of al-Ḥasan to what is otherwise the standard Sunni list of Rightly-Guided Caliphs might suggest that al-Maqrīzī has crossed the line into recognizing ‘Alid legitimacy and—who knows?—perhaps even doctrinal Shī‘ism.

But it would be unfortunate if that conclusion were drawn, and it is here that one must return to the two factors shaping al-Maqrīzī’s attitudes about the caliphate mentioned above. On the one hand, al-Maqrīzī is demonstrably “soft” on *all* members of the Banū Hāshim, Abbasid or ‘Alid, a point which should now be clear. On the other, al-Maqrīzī was not writing in a vacuum, and was himself writing for a patron. The work was written in 1433 in Mecca for a specific purpose: to summarize the faults of the Umayyads and the merits of the Abbasids in the wake of a debate about the subject in the *majlis* of al-Maqrīzī’s unnamed patron. The overtly pro-Abbasid nature of the text, avoiding any of the condemnations of the Abbasids that al-Maqrīzī adduces in the *Nizā‘*, for example, led Bosworth to suggest that the patron of the work was a member of the Abbasid family, a plausible suggestion given the Meccan context.⁴² However, in light of al-Maqrīzī’s list of Rightly-Guided Caliphs, I suggest that the patron might equally be a descendant of al-Ḥasan. After all, Mamluk-era Mecca was governed at the time by a local dynasty of *sharīfs*. In fact, when al-Maqrīzī composed the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada*, it was governed by the Hasanid *sharīf* Barakāt ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Ajlān.⁴³ There is no proof positive, of course, but given al-Maqrīzī’s nod to the ‘Alids and to al-Ḥasan in particular in this work,⁴⁴ it is certainly more than possible that the host of the Meccan *majlis* in 1433 and the patron of one of

⁴¹Ibid., fol. 159a: “wa-kānat dawlat Banī Umayyah ba‘da dawlat al-khulafā’ al-rāshidīn al-‘azīz hum Abū Bakr wa-‘Umar wa-‘Uthmān wa-‘Alī wa-al-Ḥasan raḍiya Allāh ta‘alā ‘anhum.”

⁴²Bosworth, “Al-Maqrīzī’s Epistle,” 45.

⁴³On Meccan politics, economy, and society at this time, see John Lash Meloy, “Mamluk Authority, Meccan Autonomy, and Red Sea Trade, 797–859/1395–1455,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1998.

⁴⁴Pace Bosworth, who claims that the work is “so silent in respect of the ‘Alids.” See “Al-Maqrīzī’s Epistle,” 45.

al-Maqrīzī's last works was a Hasanid member of the sharifian family, if not the *sharīf* Barakāt himself.

CONCLUSION

All of al-Maqrīzī's four works described here comment on the course of early Islamic history, especially the *Nizā'* and the *Kitāb fī Dhikr Mā Warada*. Yet, significantly, despite the fact that in the *Nizā'* he traces the deeds of the Abbasids from their Jahili beginnings to their Mamluk-era *fainéantise*, he never once takes the opportunity in this tract about the Banū Hāshim, or indeed in any other of the works I mentioned, to discuss the Fatimids. This is especially frustrating as the hidden question behind any discussion of al-Maqrīzī's views of the caliphate is the question of his Shi'ite sympathies. Was al-Maqrīzī, with his fascination for Egypt's Fatimid past, a closeted Shi'ite himself? Simply: no. As I have shown, and as al-Maqrīzī explicitly states, his position vis-à-vis the *ahl al-bayt* was one solidly within the tradition of Shafi'i thinking on the issue, and so al-Maqrīzī was in great degree merely toeing the party line. He even adduced refutations of Shi'ite arguments in doing so. Al-Maqrīzī's attitude is notably accented or nuanced with a clear veneration for the Banū Hāshim as *ahl al-bayt* and as a subset of Quraysh, but this hardly disqualifies him as a Sunni. Reverence for the Banū Hāshim and indeed the descendants of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was a common feature of Sunni piety from an early date,⁴⁵ and we should certainly not be surprised to see it in a man of broad interests and deep learning like al-Maqrīzī, who was himself a product of the religious-cultural synthesis of the Middle Periods that Lapidus has aptly called "a broad synthetic middle ground—the Sunni-Shari'a-Sufi position."⁴⁶

Nevertheless, such a position does raise some questions. Even if one accepts al-Maqrīzī as an unobjectionable Sunni, one has to admit that he had a thing about the Banū Hāshim and the progeny of 'Alī in particular, what contemporaries would have seen as forgivable Shi'ite inclinations (*tashayyu' ḥasan*).⁴⁷ The man wrote three separate treatises about the subject, and the issue is a sub-theme of other of his works, too. He had, to use a felicitous idiom for the author of a treatise on apiculture,⁴⁸ a bee in his bonnet. Clearly, al-Maqrīzī is arguing a point here, and it may be that he is arguing against an identifiable trend among his fellow Sunni Muslims of the fifteenth century, in which the Banū Hāshim were

⁴⁵Demonstrated most clearly in Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 12–13 and 283–86.

⁴⁶Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 1988), 233.

⁴⁷Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 13, citing Alessandro Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. J. A. Boyle (Cambridge, 1968), 5: 538–49.

⁴⁸Al-Maqrīzī, *Nahl 'abr al-Nahl*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 2000).

not being given due respect and in which the descendants of ‘Alī *were* being reviled. But what that position is, and whether there is more evidence for it, I do not know. Certainly, al-Maqrīzī’s writings are at least evidence of one man’s conviction that Sunnis of his day were in need of a little schooling.